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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 000249

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: TOWARD A CANADIAN DEMOCRACY PROMOTION AGENCY

REF: A. 08 OTTAWA 1470

[1](#)B. 07 OTTAWA 1878

[1](#)C. 08 OTTAWA 593

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Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Conservative Party and the Harper government have championed the creation of a non-partisan Canadian democracy promotion agency. Details are still few and may not emerge with any clarity until fall 2009. So far, the government appears not to have included any new funding in its 2009 budget, and may anticipate instead drawing on existing funds at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and/or Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The responsible Minister of State, Stephen Fletcher, hopes to meet with relevant U.S. officials and NGOs in Washington the week of May 18. Embassy believes this is an excellent opportunity to enhance our global partnership with Canada on democracy building. End summary.

PROMOTING "CANADIAN VALUES"

[1](#)2. (U) In its 2008 campaign platform and the November 19 "Speech from the Throne" (ref a), the Conservative Party of Canada and the government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, respectively, explicitly advocated the creation of a new, non-partisan democracy promotion agency" to support the peaceful transition to democracy in repressive countries and help emerging democracies build strong institutions." In late 2008, PM Harper entrusted this portfolio to Minister of State for Democratic Reform Stephen Fletcher, in addition to his duties focused on Senate reform and seat reallocation in the House of Commons tied to population shifts.

[1](#)3. (C) In a meeting with poloff on March 24, Fletcher said that a framework for the agency would be not be available until fall 2009, at the earliest. He commented that the agency would promote "Canadian values," while also incorporating lessons from the United Kingdom's Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the USG's NED, NDI, and IRI, as well as the Netherlands' Institute for Multiparty Democracy and Norway's Center for Democracy Support. Fletcher especially praised the model of the Westminster Foundation for allowing several parties to come together to advance political party development. He stated that the new agency would likely try to harness the experience of Canada's federalist parties (the Conservatives and Liberals, and perhaps the smaller New Democratic Party) and showcase their commitment to democratic principles. Fletcher expressed a

hope that the new agency would be able to hire some of the many Canadians working for democracy promotion NGOs in Washington.

14. (C) Fletcher noted that no decisions had yet defined the agency's target countries, but acknowledged that the agency likely would take into account Canada's Commonwealth and Francophonie ties. He specifically highlighted Zimbabwe's need for democracy. He added that he, along with a senior policy advisor and two civil servants, planned to visit Washington for two to three days during the week of May 18 to discuss the establishment of this agency, and welcomed our offers to be of assistance in seeking appointments with relevant USG officials.

15. (U) In a February 18 press interview, Fletcher had stated that the agency would operate globally to help build "purpose-driven and principled" political parties, but added Q"purpose-driven and principled" political parties, but added that the agency would work with all stakeholders, including support for grassroots organizations, independent media, and trade unions.

BUT WHAT ABOUT FUNDING?

16. (C) The FY 2009-2010 government budget apparently did not include a line item for the new democracy promotion agency. Fletcher declined to discuss the agency's potential sources of funding. However, DFAIT Democracy and War Economies Division, Democracy Unit, Deputy Director Carole McQueen separately told poloff on March 27 that the agency would likely draw funds from existing DFAIT and CIDA resources. McQueen noted that DFAIT and CIDA programs with left-over or unused funds could be rolled-over into the new agency through "sunset" provisions. McQueen speculated that some democracy

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assistance programs could move entirely from CIDA to the new agency.

THE ROOTS OF THE AGENCY

17. (U) A July 2007 House of Commons Foreign Affairs and International Development Committee report entitled "Advancing Canada's Role in International Support for Democracy Development" had included 28 recommendations on new approaches to democracy promotion, most importantly the creation of a new democracy support foundation (ref b). The parliamentary committee that drafted the 2007 report consulted with organizations in Washington, New York, London, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Stockholm, and Oslo. The Washington consultations on February 5-6, 2007 included NED, NDI, IRI, CSIS, Carnegie Endowment, World Bank, OAS, State Department, and USAID. The government responded to the July 2007 parliamentary report with a November 2007 white paper entitled "A New Focus on Democracy Support" (ref c), which formalized the concept of a government-funded but independent Democracy Council (comprising the International Development Research Council, Elections Canada, the NGO "Rights and Democracy," the Parliamentary Center, the Forum of Federations, and the National Judicial Institute).

A DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE HUB IN LIMA

8 (C) DFAIT's McQueen also described to poloff plans in fall 2009 to establish a "democracy hub" in Lima to promote democratization in the Andes region. According to McQueen, Canada will send two Canadian diplomats to staff the hub, which could grow with time to include "spokes" in Quito and other Posts. The diplomats would be accredited in Peru and the neighboring states where they would be most engaged, such as Venezuela. McQueen added that DFAIT had already requested Treasury Board funding for these positions.

COMMENT

19. (SBU) Canada has long been active in democracy/good governance promotion, and the creation of this new agency could be a very positive step to advance these efforts further. Given that Canadian thinking appears still be very tentative, the interactions with experts in Washington in May could be highly valuable to both our countries in this global partnership.

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